

## BOOK REVIEW

VERNE HUSER. 2004. **Rivers of Texas.** (ISBN 978-1-585-44369-7, pbk.) Texas A&M University Press, John H. Lindsey Building, Lewis Street, 4354 TAMU, College Station, Texas 77843-4354, U.S.A. (**Orders:** [www.tamupress.com](http://www.tamupress.com), 1-800-826-8911). \$16.95, 233 pp., 60 b&w photos and map of major Texas river basins, 6¼" × 9⅜".

Since the beginning of time, rivers have defined how flora, fauna, and human beings exist on earth. It is no different here in Texas, but in the words of our author it is what makes Texas rivers unique:

Few people outside of Texas appreciate the vastness and variety offered by streams of the Lone Star state: pineywoods, bayous and moss-draped, cypress-lined streams of East Texas; spring-fed, limestone-bedded rivers of the Edwards Plateau; rain- and snow-fed perennial creeks and sandy arroyos of the Trans-Pecos mountains and the high plains; previously pirate-plied tidewater creeks, where some still believe they may find buried treasure; and the steep-walled canyons of the Rio Grande. The rivers vary from region to region, and the same river may display different characters in a trip of several hundred miles to the sea.

The author groups Texas rivers into four categories: BORDER RIVERS (Rio Grande on the south, Red River on the north, Sabine on the east), HEARTLAND RIVERS (Colorado, Brazos, Trinity), REGIONAL SPECIALTY RIVERS (the Neches of East Texas, the Nueces of South Texas, the Pecos, Canadian River of the Texas Panhandle), and INTO THE GULF OF MEXICO (those with a short course) (San Jacinto River and Buffalo Bayou, San Antonio, Lavaca and Navidad, Guadalupe).

Each river chapter also has a sidebar summarizing important information about the river including the river's general location, the source of its name, its major tributaries and recreational activities, its length, and the area of its watershed. It also includes public lands and special features. Public lands may be federal, state, or local and are listed from upstream to downstream. Features may not necessarily be protected, but they represent important association with the rivers.

To quote the author, "Texas rivers have not always been kind to Texans..." Flood stories in Texas have been legion: wide floodplains have been created by the massive amounts of water created from Texas storms. Thirty-eight inches of rain fell in a twenty-four hour period at Thrall in the San Gabriel River (Brazos) watershed of Central Texas September 9 and 10, 1921. Many Texas rivers may barely trickle during the dry season, but once inches-deep-and-wide rivers can become a mile wide when sudden 'cloudbursts' appear.

"...neither have Texans been kind to their rivers." Free flowing rivers have been altered, polluted and better known for what's been lost than for what remains. Huser points out the importance of preventing floods due to poor ecology like building in floodplains, poorly managed dams, run-off increase by human activity (from roofs, driveways, parking lots and roads, bare farm fields, and over-grazed rangelands).

In his epilogue Huser writes: "We have only recently begun to learn from modern science what Native American people have been trying to tell us for generations: that the whole earth and everything in it and on it are connected, that if we destroy one element, we impact all the others, that if we disrupt its patterns, we lose the whole."—Linny Heagy, *Linny/Designer, Illustrator, email: a0005835@airmail.net*